

ciphers, painted at a temperature of zero, leaves on me an effect of numb and frozen nullity. Even the background is grey; Paris does not lend itself to glimpses of perfect landscape like the Norman countryside. Even the lovely metaphors and similes of *Madame Bovary* are gone. As for *La Tentation de Saint Antoine*, *Salamambo*, and *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, all their brilliance and all their perfection of style do not save them from seeming at times like dramatised encyclopaedias of comparative mythology, Punic archaeology, and modern arts and sciences respectively. Flaubert could not resist being exhaustingly exhaustive, until the reader begins to feel he is being subjected to a formula, and that he is doomed to be spared not the obscurest deity, the tiniest antiquity, or the weariest experiment all the way from A to Z. With half the length, these books might have lived twice as long. He confessed himself in later life that he had lost himself in jungles of detail; but he continued to do it.

Naturally, the existence of these blemishes, if they exist, they do, is a matter of feeling and therefore of mere opinion; and a critic has always to remind himself that blame is often blind, far oftener than love. Still, others have felt similarly; and the ultimate root of the evil seems to be in each book the same—Flaubert's grudge against existence and particularly against his own generation. Because he hated life, to pillory the futility of the search

for happiness
in *L* Education*, the futility of the search for
knowledge in
Bouvard et Pecuchet, was to him a passionate
satisfaction;
to the ordinary reader, who hates life less, at
such length
it becomes a bore. To cry 'Vanity of vanities'
is always a
pleasure to the vanity of the crier; for he is
proclaiming
also by implication his own superior insight in
discovering
it. But to the vanity of the hearer it is less
appetising.
Similarly the ordinary reader, less nauseated
by modernity,